

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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DIA WASHDC

CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 7775

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SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION SEPTEMBER 30

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1. SUMMARY. SYRIAN CEASE-FIRE IN MOUNTAINS, LEAVING

PALESTINIANS HOLDING ONLY ONE POSITION NORTH OF BEIRUT/DAMASCUS ROAD. FATAH ENVOY ABU MAZEN AND AL'S HASSAN SABRI KHOLI ATTEMPTING WORK OUT SYRIAN/PALESTINIAN AGREEMENT BUT FEARS MOUNT THAT FAILURE OF NEGOTIATIONS WILL BRING REVIEWED SYRIAN/CHRISTIAN OFFENSIVE. CONFLICT INTENSIFIES BETWEEN PLO MODERATES AND RADICALS. SARKIS STILL TRYING REMAIN NEUTRAL BUT IS IN CONTACT ALL PARTIES AND EXPECTED SEND ENVOY TO DAMASCUS SEP 30. REQUESTS FOR A "STRIKE FORCE" COMING IN FROM ALL SIDES. GROUND SITUATION STABLE WITH SHELLING ON TRADITIONAL FRONTS AND SMALL-SCALE REAR GUARD ACTION IN MOUNTAINS. END SUMMARY.

2. CEASE-FIRE IN MOUNTAINS. HAVING ACHIEVED MOST OF ITS IMMEDIATE MILITARY OBJECTIVES, SYRIA BEGAN CEASE-FIRE LATE SEP 29 AND TWO-DAY BATTLE OF MOUNTAINS IS LARGELY OVER. VOICE OF LEBANON CLAIMS QURNAYIL, HAMMANA AND FALUGHA TAKEN BY SYRIANS AND SYNTURA AND MTAYN IN CHRISTIANS HANDS, EXCEPT POCKETS OF RESISTANCE. WE UNDERSTAND LEBANESE CHRISTIAN ELEMENTS ARE PRESENT IN ALL CAPTURED AREAS, BUT ALL SITES EXCEPT SALIMA AND POSSIBLY MTAYN ACTUALLY CAPTURED BY SYRIANS. AS OF MORNING SEP 30, RAS EL-METN IS ONLY REMAINING PALESTINIAN/LEFTIST POSITION NORTH OF BEIRUT/DAMASCUS ROAD. HEAVY SYRIAN BOMBARDMENTS SEVERELY DAMAGED SEVERAL VILLAGES, BUT ONLY SERIOUS FIGHTING OCCURRED SEP 28 AT AYN AS-SIHA AND TARSHISH BEFORE ARAFAT RETREAT ORDER OF EARLY SEP 29. LEBANESE ARMY G-2 SOURCE SAYS ONLY 20 PALESTINIANS KIA IN ENTIRE TWO-DAY OPERATION, AND BESHIR GEMAYEL CLAIMS ONLY FOUR CHRISTIANS KILLED. Wafa DENIES ARAFAT GAVE RETREAT ORDER, SAYING, "WE WILL FIGHT TO THE LAST MAN AND THE LAST CARTRIDGE." WE UNDERSTAND PALESTINIAN REJECTIONIST ELEMENTS ARE DENOUNCING RETREAT ORDER. NEVERTHELESS, RETREATING PALESTINIANS NOW CONCENTRATING IN ALEY, BRINGING MOST OF THEIR HEAVY EQUIPMENT WITH THEM. RADIO DAMASCUS CONTINUES BROADCAST SYRIAN-CONTROLLED VANGUARDS BULLETINS ON "CLEANING OUT OF UNDISCIPLINED ELEMENTS." SYRIANS APPEAR ATTEMPTING MASK EXTENT OF THEIR INVOLVEMENT BY PLACING SMALL VANGUARD GROUPS IN ALL SYRIAN-CONTROLLED MOUNTAIN AREAS.

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3. SYRIANS PAUSE. WHETHER SYRIANS WILL CONTINUE MILITARY OPTION APPEARS HINGE ON SUCCESS CURRENT SYRIAN/PALESTINIAN NEGOTIATIONS. FATAH ENVOYS ABU NAZEN AND ABU MAHIR EXPECTED IN BEIRUT SEP 30 CARRYING WHAT WE UNDERSTAND ARE "SERIOUS SYRIAN PROPOSALS." HASAN SABRI AL-KHOLI EXPECTED IN DAMASCUS SEP 30 WITH PALESTINIAN/LEFTIST POSITION TO ATTEMPT WORK OUT

AGREEMENT. KHOLI MET SEP 29 WITH ARAFAT AS WELL AS WITH SUPREME ISLAMIC COUNCIL WHICH ASKED HIM SEEK URGENT CONVENING OF ARAB SUMMIT. LEBANESE ARMY G-2 SOURCE SAYS LEBANESE LEFT NOT WILLING TO FACE SYRIA ALONE, ESPECIALLY WITH JUNBLATT OUT OF COUNTRY AND ARE DISGRUNTLED WITH PALESTINIAN FAILURE TO HOLD FORWARD DEFENSE LINE IN MOUNTAINS. WE HEAR RUMORS FROM BOTH PALESTINIANS AND RIGHTISTS THAT JUNBLATT, WHO NOW IN SAUDI ARABIA, AND EXPECTED TO PROCEED NEXT TO BAGHDAD, THEN RETURN TO CAIRO, PLANNING STAY AWAY FOR SEVERAL WEEKS. L'ORIENT-LE JOUR SAYS OBJECTIVE OF SYRIAN MOUNTAIN OFFENSIVE WAS RUPTURE OF LEFTIST/PALESTINIAN ALLIANCE. G-2 SOURCE SAYS HE BELIEVES SYRIAN PUSH TO OPEN ROAD TO BEIRUT WOULD NOW ENCOUNTER NO RPT NO SERIOUS OPPOSITION AT LEAST AS FAR AS BAABDA. AMIN GEMAYEL AND DANY CHAMOUN TOLD PRESS THEY EXPECT TO CONTINUE CAMPAIGN TO ALEY, JIYYEH AND EVEN DAMOUR, EVEN WITHOUT SYRIAN HELP.

4. PALESTINIAN DILEMMA. CONFLICT BETWEEN PLO MODERATES AND RADICALS INTENSIFIED BY DEFEAT IN MOUNTAINS. WE UNDERSTAND MODERATES THOUGHT THEY HAD PHASED WITHDRAWAL AGREEMENT WITH SARKIS AND SOME ELEMENTS IRRITATED WITH WHAT THEY REGARD AS ARAFAT'S FAILURE TO IMPLEMENT THEM FAST ENOUGH. WE UNDERSTAND ARAFAT POSITION NOT SERIOUSLY THREATENED. COMING DAYS WILL LIKELY SEE INTENSIFIED VERBAL, IF NOT PHYSICAL, COMBAT AMONG PALESTINIANS. WE UNDERSTAND PALESTINIANS LEADERS FEAR TRIPOLI WILL BE NEXT SYRIAN TARGET IF PRESENT TALKS FAIL, AND PERCEIVE SOME SYRIAN REINFORCEMENT IN AREA.

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5. SARKIS KEEPS TRYING. PRESIDENT SARKIS CONTINUES NONCOMMITAL ON SYRIAN/RIGHTIST OFFENSIVE. DEPUTY SULAYMAN AL-ALI SAYS SARKIS TOLD HIM HE WAS NOT FOREWARNED OF SYRIAN ATTACK, AND WE UNDERSTAND SARKIS MADE SIMILAR STATEMENT TO PALESTINIAN LEADERS. SARKIS EXPECTED SEND ENVOY TO DAMASCUS SEP 30. PRESIDENT MET ALEXANDER GEMAYEL SEP 29 AND IS IN CONTACT WITH LEFTIST AND PALESTINIAN LEADERS TO WHOM HE IS SAID TO HAVE PROPOSED: 1) CEASE-FIRE AND 2) BEGINNING OF DIALOGUE TO DISCUSS MUTUAL RETREAT FROM MOUNTAINS AND INSTALLATION OF AL FORCES THERE. SARKIS SAID TO HAVE DISCUSSED REUNIFICATION OF ARMY WITH ARMY G-2 COL. JULES BUSTANI AND FORMER G-2 CHIEF COL. GABY LAHOUD.

6. MORE ON STRIKE FORCE. SAEB SALAM TOLD PRESS HE VERY OPTIMISTIC END OF CRISIS IS NEAR. HE SAID AL FORCES MUST BE CONVERTED INTO STRIKE FORCE IN ORDER RESTORE UNITY, ADDING EGYPTIAN PARTICIPATION IN STRIKE FORCE IS NECESSARY TO REINFORCE ARAB SOLIDARITY. PIERRE GEMAYEL TOLD PRESS IF SARKIS CANNOT OBTAIN A STRIKE FORCE, COUNTRY WILL REMAIN IN "AN INFERNAL CYCLE OF INSECURITY."

7. CROUND SITUATION ELSEWHERE. SITUATION GENERALLY STABLE COUNTRY-WIDE, EXCEPT FOR MOPPING UP OPERATIONS IN THE METN, AND SHELLING ON SEVERAL TRADITIONAL FRONTS. SEVERAL BEIRUT RESIDENTIAL AREAS SHELLED SEP 29. MUSEUM CROSSPOINT CLOSED DUE SHELLING AND INTENSE SNIPER ACTIVITY. SHELLING AND CLASHES REPORTED FROM SOUTHEAST SUBURBS. IN NORTH, 22 REPORTED KILLED IN SEP 29 CLASHES IN TRIPOLI AREA. AL MOHARRIR SAYS NM HAS DECLARED GENERAL MOBILIZATION IN SIDON AND CLAIMS REINFORCEMENTS BEING SENT TO FACE SYRIANS AT JEZZINE. LANE

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